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Book Review

Kierszenbaum AL: *Histology and Cell Biology: An Introduction to Pathology*, 640 pp, St. Louis, Mosby, 2002 (\$46.95).

A few years ago, you may say in the last century, I recommended a histology book written by two British pathologists as the text that I would use to teach histology to medical students. That was then, but today, unquestionably, I would vote for the book presented here. It “reflects much better the spirit of the new trends in medical education in the US,” it “appears graphically more appealing and more modern,” it “digs in more into the basic cell biology,” it “is more conceptual than anatomic.” These sound bites under quotation marks are, in essence, what I think about the new book. At the same time, they are also a justification for my switching sides and an apology to my British colleagues for changing allegiances. On the other hand, maybe this will stimulate them, or somebody else, to write in a few years a new and completely different histology that would sweep me off my feeble feet. Faithfulness in emotional matters, said Oscar Wilde, like consistency in intellectual ones is simply a confession of failure and, in 10 years or so, I will need to prove that I am not failing, in more than one manner.

The subtitle of this book is “an introduction to pathology.” As such, I would recommend it to all pathology teachers and many a resident interested in learning about the modern views of cell and tissue physiology and dynamic microscopic organ biology. The emphasis is on teach-

ing the student how the cells and tissues function, rather than how they appear under the microscope. Having said that, I should add that there is more than enough standard microscopic or electron microscopic morphology to satisfy the old-timers. However, in most instances, the static anatomy has been replaced by functional cell biology, subcellular physiology, and, in many instances, molecular biology. References to pathology are made *in dosi refracta*, but often enough for my taste. The highlight of the book are the schematic drawings illustrating the main cell components, organization of the tissues, and the functions of various elements. The balance between the new and old stuff has been tipped toward the new, but to reassure the classicist, I have no doubts that the students using this book will know enough microscopic anatomy to understand the sophomore pathology concepts.

This is an exciting new book, and if you are on the curriculum committee of your medical school I recommend that you get a copy and see whether it fits into your teaching program. If it does not, I would suggest that you have a few interdepartmental discussions and reexamine the goals of your teaching system. This might sound a bit cocky on my side, but I strongly feel that this is just what we need for educating the future physicians for the challenges of the 21st century.

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